

H.-G & M. Hoprich & Family
Josef Reichlgasse 7
A-7000 Eisenstadt
AUSTRIA
Tel.: +43-2682-76021
Fax : +43-2682-63740
Mobile: +43-664-55 44 021

E-mail: HansMaggiHoprich@aon.at
SKYPE ID: HansMaggiHoprich
Internet: www.DMGint.de
www.beg.or.at

www.johannes-rebmann-stiftung.de/en/missionaries/hoprich.html
<http://hoprich.beeplq.de/blog.pl?blogid=78401&sess>

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BURGENLAND UPDATE
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May 1st 2008

Dear Friends,

“I HAVE to come and talk to you...!” This is how we were greeted on the telephone a few weeks ago by a retired manager from Burgenland who had been quite influential. Straight away we arranged a time to meet him and a few days later he was sitting in our lounge. We were astonished when he explained to us that he was planning to travel and he wanted to make arrangements in case anything happened to him... An acquaintance of his had told him about a funeral that we had taken not long before, and described how we had made it appropriate for that person. Our guest requested a similar funeral for himself. He gave us the details and his motives in writing – it was like making a will. Although he did not know us, he showed a lot of trust from the outset and although he described himself as a ‘strict atheist’, amazingly he had no objection to having a genuinely Christian funeral!

Because of this and also through the meetings which we will describe later, we feel encouraged to stay put here in Eisenstadt, to continue building up relationships and to carry on sowing the seed of God’s Word without ceasing, wherever we have the opportunity.

Nearly everything in this UPDATE has something to do with INVITATIONS.

One of them we described in our last BURGENLAND UPDATE (February) – **our visit to Annika’s old school was something quite special!** Never before had we taken so much time to talk to the children about JESUS, about Easter, Christmas, conversion and our life’s journey. We gave the class teacher the **book “Five Minutes for a Stranger”** which tells of the experiences of many DMG/GMF missionaries. One of the school girls told us a few days later that the teacher had read a story from the book to the class - it was the one about Hans-Georg entitled ‘Three Times They Tried to Kill Me...!’

In the meantime **ANNIKA (11)** has **changed school** on the advice of her class teacher and is now going to the Grammar School. She was in tears when she said goodbye to her old class. She gave each of her classmates a bar of chocolate and little story booklet with an evangelistic message.

Three of her teachers have spoken to us since, “May we still ask you to come back and speak to our classes?” No question – when invited, we will gladly come!

Invitations...

Other recent invitations have included 2 ladies’ breakfasts and preaching engagements at various churches (2 of them in Germany) and at our church in Eisenstadt and Margret has spoken to a children’s group about missionary work.

Hans-Georg is about to go to Zenica (Bosnia) for 2 days to prepare for two weeks’ outreach planned for the end of July, in which a whole house-group from the Vienna area will be taking part. Hans is travelling with the house-group leader and his wife and another Austrian brother. **This kind of joint house-group venture is unprecedented.** We are very excited about it and we would be delighted if other groups could take up this idea!

We also had a special guest at a Christian lecture meeting in Eisenstadt: a former Muslim (www.granum-sinapis.com) spoke on ‘**GOD or ALLAH – why I became a Christian**’

It was a very eventful evening with much information about the background, history and aims of Islam and its difference from Christianity. He also gave a clear testimony of his conversion and spoke on the distinction between faith and religion. At the last minute we requested personal protection for the speaker and this turned out to be very important. As well as the 60 people in the audience a group of angry Muslims turned up. They were questioned by the Police, then barred from the meeting.

Our daughter-in-law Maria and a friend provided the music for the evening. She sang some lively Christian songs with piano accompaniment.

Invitation for Easter

Margret was invited to speak at a **ladies' Easter breakfast meeting in Vienna Floridsdorf** – a real highlight for us. Her topic: 'The Resurrection – Witnesses Wanted!'

Invitation to an Egyptian Lunch

This was straight after the ladies' breakfast! It was from **our missionaries Rafaat and Susanne Mashraki** (<http://arab4jesus.twoday.net/>). It also provided the opportunity for their first debriefing. They have been under our care for nearly four years and it was high time that we caught up with them and saw how they were getting on in their married life, their family and their work.

Another invitation from PIONEERS

Two days later we had the privilege of flying from Bratislava (Slovakia) to England to take part in some important meetings. Hans-Georg is a member of the European Mission Board of PIONEERS, which is a relatively new mission (founded in 1978 www.actionpartners.co.uk/site/) working worldwide with over 1700 missionaries.

Our time in England was filled with meetings and discussions and we had a good time of fellowship in Bawtry in South Yorkshire. Not far away in Epworth there is the Old Rectory, the birthplace of John and Charles Wesley, the pioneers of the Methodist Church. The Rectory is now a museum. Very interesting with an impressive guided tour – we thoroughly recommend it!

We spent Palm Sunday in London as we wanted to go to a particular church service: All Souls, Langham Place (John Stott's former church) not far from Piccadilly Circus. The service was balm for our souls with a clear Gospel message (www.allsouls.org/ascm/allsouls/static/sermons/showsermon.flow?id=11996) and a moving testimony from a married couple. The wife was in a wheelchair. She had been very active in sport before being diagnosed with a brain tumour. After brain surgery she remained paralysed. She spoke full of hope of how it would be to be able to leap for joy again in God's presence, and also how she finds joy in everyday life in spite of her disability through the 24-hour love and care given by the people around her.

Meeting people and reliving memories

Before we flew back from Stanstead Airport to Bratislava we fulfilled our wish to revisit All Nations Christian College (www.allnations.ac.uk) where we had trained (1982-1984). It was the first time we had been back there in many years (not since 1984 in Margret's case!). **Looking back on it today, it all seems so unreal, like an amazing dream!** Although it was the Easter holidays we met 2 people in the College who still remembered us, a former fellow student Richard Harvey (a messianic Jew) who now lectures on Judaism and teaches Hebrew and our dear friend Anna who was head cook in our time - she is now project manager. It was a wonderful visit. Our time at ANCC is probably one of the best of our life so far. Even Chaseway Cottages (over 200 years old) where we had stayed for 2 years were still there and had only been modernised a little...

The day after we had got back to Eisenstadt, Margret greeted the postman spontaneously in English, "Hello! Good morning!" You should have seen his face! She then had to explain that she'd only just got back from England and hadn't yet switched out of 'English mode'!

Please pray also...

...for our dear daughter-in-law **Claudia** who has been suffering for weeks with a slipped disc and has such pain and numbness in her legs so that she can hardly move... Our grandson is now 10 months old and is still being breastfed. Both Grandmas have been very busy helping look after little Timo...

When we prepared the Easter message together we came across the following inspiring story which we would like to share with you in closing:

An African Christian lost his 17 year old daughter. The whole family were in mourning, but they were comforted by the hope of eternal life. The father put a simple wooden cross on his daughter's grave and wrote on it, "**Death has no hands!**" When asked what this inscription meant, he said, "I know that death cannot take away my child and keep her for ever, but I will see her again with Jesus. **Because of Easter death no longer has any hands!**" **That should be our message too!**



With this we would send our warmest greetings – and we are so grateful for all your support

Hans-Georg and Margret Hoprich and family